



## DIVISION OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

[www.doh.sd.gov](http://www.doh.sd.gov)

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Community Health Services  
Disease Prevention  
Family Health  
Health Promotion  
State Epidemiologist

### **ANTHRAX Fact Sheet**

(malignant edema, woolsorter's disease )

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#### **Office of Disease Prevention**

**(605) 773-3737**

**1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only**

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

#### **What is anthrax?**

Anthrax is a bacterial disease that can infect warm-blooded animals including humans.

#### **Who gets anthrax?**

Anthrax is primarily an occupational disease. It is occasionally in individuals who are exposed to dead animals and animal products such as wool, hair, and hides.

#### **How is anthrax spread?**

The spores of the anthrax bacteria can live in the soil for many years. Man may become infected with anthrax by inhaling contaminated soil particles, by contact with infected animal tissue, or by handling wool or hair from diseased animals. Infection of the intestinal tract can occur by eating undercooked meat from diseased animals. Anthrax is not spread person-to-person.

#### **What are the symptoms of anthrax?**

The symptoms vary depending upon the site of the disease. In skin, a boil-like lesion appears which eventually forms a black center. A swelling of the lymph gland under the arm may occur. In the lungs, symptoms may resemble the common cold and may progress to severe breathing problems and even death. The symptoms of intestinal anthrax include vomiting, nausea, fever, abdominal pain and diarrhea.

#### **How soon after infection do symptoms appear?**

The incubation period is usually within 7 days, but may be prolonged up to 60 days.

#### **Is a person able to spread anthrax?**

There are no reports of spread from human to human.

#### **Does past infection with anthrax make a person immune?**

A second attack with this disease is unlikely.

#### **What is the treatment for anthrax?**

Although effectiveness may be limited after symptoms are present, high dose antibiotic treatment with penicillin, ciprofloxacin or doxycycline should be undertaken. All forms of the disease must be treated promptly, and inhalation anthrax is nearly always fatal if not treated before symptoms begin. Individuals with fever or evidence of disease in an area where anthrax cases are occurring should be treated for anthrax until the disease is excluded.

#### **Related Sites**

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases**  
[http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease\\_listing/anthrax\\_gi.html](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease_listing/anthrax_gi.html)